

## **2013 REPORT OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

The Dunstable Conservation Commission meetings are generally scheduled on the second and fourth Monday of each month at the Town Hall, starting at 7:30pm. Interested residents are welcome to attend.

The Dunstable Conservation Commission serves the community as a state mandated regulatory agency while also promoting the conservation and sustainable use of Dunstable's natural resources. The Conservation Commission Act (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 8C) of 1957 designates the Conservation Commission as the official agency charged with the protection of the community's natural resources. In 1972, Conservation Commissions were given the added responsibility for administering the Wetlands Protection Act (MA G.L. Chapter 131, Section 40). In addition to its responsibility under the state statute, the Commission has similar responsibilities as set forth in the Dunstable General Wetlands Bylaw.

Under the Wetlands Protection Act and the Town Bylaw, Commission files show the following actions were taken in the calendar year 2013:

### Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area

Delineation (ANRAD) hearings/continuations	1
Notices of Intent hearings/continuations	5
Requests for Determination/continuations	5
Wetland Bylaw Hearing	1
Site Visits	20
Certificates of Compliance	15
Building Permits	6
Occupancy Permits	4
Demolition Permits	1
Enforcement Orders	2

Secretary Cheryl Mann attended the MACC conference on March 2nd at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester. In addition to viewing the exhibits, she attended two classes; "Commissions Behaving Badly-Lessons in Legal Liability" and "Writing Denials Under Local Wetlands Bylaw". Judy Larter continued to serve as the Commission's representative on the Dunstable Community Preservation Committee.

The Conservation Commission held a "cut your own Christmas tree" sale December 7th and 14th at the Flat Rock Hill (Mill St.) and Amos Kendall (High St.) conservation properties. The Commission raised \$1,300. Funds must be spent for conservation purposes.

The Commission worked again with Bay State Forestry Service to control patches of the invasive species Japanese Knotweed at Flat Rock Hill/Blanchard Hill Conservation areas as well as Phragmites near the bridge on Main Street.

The Commission, working with a forester, selectively cut timber on part of the Spaulding Proctor property. Monies from the cut must be used for Conservation purposes. The cut will improve forest growth and wildlife habitat.

The Conservation Secretary attended a Regional Conservation meeting in 2013 at the Nashua River Watershed Association. Local Commission members and staff met to discuss a topic chosen by the host community of Townsend.

The Conservation Commission has been the fortunate beneficiary of many Eagle Scout projects over the years. Scouts contact the Commission to request assistance in searching for projects to do on conservation land. These scouts work closely with our members. Two Eagle Scout projects were completed in 2013. At the site of the old Kendall-Cummings Barn on Main Street an informational kiosk was installed and trees and brush were removed to expose the stone foundation. At the Flat Rock Hill and the Stone Arch Bridge conservation areas another project involved installing kiosks with facts about those areas.

For information about the Conservation Commission, please go to the town website at [www.dunstable-ma.gov](http://www.dunstable-ma.gov)

#### Useful Information

One sometimes hears that Dunstable is closed to hunting. This is not the case. Dunstable does have a discharge of firearms bylaw. One must have the written permission of the landowner in order to discharge a firearm. As a matter of practice, neither the Town, nor the Dunstable Rural Land Trust grants such permission for land they control. Bow hunting and fishing are permitted unless the property is posted. State property (Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife) is governed by separate rules; check their website at <http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/>

Questions sometimes arise with regard to the operation of snow vehicles and recreation vehicles. Residents may wish to refer to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 90B, Section 26, paragraph (e): "No person shall operate a snow vehicle or recreation vehicle on privately-owned property unless the operator has in his possession a document, signed by the owner authorizing operation of such vehicle." "No person shall operate a snow vehicle or recreation vehicle on publicly-owned property except on trails marked and designated for use by such vehicles, or without the express permission of the owner."

Respectfully,  
Leah Basbanes, Chair  
Juan Amodei  
Alan Chaney  
Jeff Haight  
Judy Larter  
Bill Moeller  
Marilyn Pike  
Cheryl Mann, Secretary